Elers Koch, Forest Supervisor, Lolo National Forest

By Elers Koch
7-30-40

1910 Fire Season

No one can claim to be a real oldtimer in the Forest Service unless he went through the 1910 fire season. We have had bad fires since, but nothing has approached the terrific burning conditions of the two days of August 21 and 22, 1910. After a long drought period beginning in March, conditions became more and more critical. Springs dried up, and the fuels in the forest were ready to ignite almost spontaneously. Dry lightning storms scattered numerous fires through the undeveloped wilderness country of North Idaho and western Montana. The inadequate forces of the Forest Service battled the flames stubbornly through July, getting some of the fires and being driven back on others.

Finally the climax came. With the humidity down to almost nothing, the southwest fire wind from the Snake River desert whipped into a gale that lasted two days. Hundreds of fires that had been burning for days picked up and joined in the advance of the terrific sweep of fire which roared out of the wilderness forests of the Clearwater, St. Joe and Coeur d'Alene country in Idaho, across the Bitterroot Mountains into Montana to a distance of 40 or 50 miles. The sky turned first a ghastly, ominous yellow, then darkness shut down in the middle of the afternoon. When all was over a large part of the town of Wallace had burned. Saltese, Haugan, Deborgia and numerous ranches and ranger stations were left in ashes. Eighty-seven men lost their lives in the flames. Game animals were killed by the thousands and the stream bottoms were white with the bellies of dead trout. Billions of feet of fine timber had burned, and millions of acres left a blackened waste. Missoula was filled with refugees from the Coeur d'Alene branch who escaped on the last train out.

I was supervisor of the Lolo Forest at the time. In the night of August 21 the telephone bell at my bedside awakened me. It was Ranger Kottke at Wallace. "Mr. Koch," he said, "the fires have all gone wild. The flames are just breaking into Wallace. I don't know where my family is, and my men and pack strings are all out in the path of the fire, and I am afraid many of them can't escape alive." A little later Ranger Haun called from Saltese. He said the hills were all afire around town and he had 200 firefighters there trying to save the town. Just then communication ceased. The Coeur d'Alene lines were down. In the morning I went out with a special Northern Pacific train down the Coeur d'Alene branch to see what could be done. About three in the afternoon we pulled into Deborgia. The head of the big fire had just reached the town, and some of the buildings were afire. It was black dark and everybody was carrying lanterns.

We loaded the residents of the town on the train and started back down. Between Henderson and St. Regis the whole canyon was afire on both sides and the train had to run through it. The heat was so great that we couldn't stand in the open door of a box car, but fortunately we made it through to St. Regis. About midnight weather conditions changed. The wind continued to blow, but the humidity picked up, and the fires made little progress the next day. The night of August 22 came a general rain.

It is possible that such burning conditions might again occur, but with the present organization of the Forest Service it is not likely that sufficient fires will ever again be uncontrolled at one time to build up such a widespread conflagration.

Clarence Swim, Assist. Forest Supervisor, Gallatin National Forest

The late summer of 1910 approached with ominous, sinister and threatening portents. Dire catastrophe seemed to permeate the very atmosphere. Throughout the first weeks of August the sun arose a coppery red ball and passed overhead red and threatening as if announcing an impending disaster. This fiery red sun continued day after day. The air felt close, oppresive and explosive. Drift smoke clouded the sky day after day. District Forester W. B. Greeley, en route to Missoula over the Great Northern, wired from the train to be met at the depot. His first question was, "Where are the fires?" He was very much surprised when told that there were no fires of serious proportions on the Kaniksu and that most of the smoke in the air was reported to be drift smoke from Canada. Shortly thereafter fires began springing up seemingly from no cause. The town of Newport and locality had been cleaned of men and fire fighting tools. About August 18 or 19 so many fires appeared along and within sight of the railroad that trainmen in alarm reported the condition to the depot agent at Newport. The agent, sensing that a conflagration was inevitable, called a hasty meeting of townspeople at his office. Mr. Millar was absent in the field. I attended the meeting. The critical situation was discussed and the nucleus of an organization started. Later during the same day the mayor called a hasty meeting to further discuss best means to protect the town and adjacent property. It now seemed inevitable that the numerous fires burning within and outside of the forest boundary could no longer be controlled, especially in the event of a high wind. Groups of citizens were organized, and arrangements made, with what little there was to work with, to keep the fire as far from the town as possible. Every available tool was placed in service, even garden hoes, rakes and pitchforks. August 20 arrived more ominous and threatening than the days preceding. Reports of so many fires came in that it was impossible, with means at hand, to even begin to cope with the situation. The wind began to increase in velocity from the west. Small fires were fanned into large ones. The air was rapidly becoming filled with smoke more dense than previously. From the window of the office we could see for several miles along the timbered bench lands northeasterly from the river. These yellow pine slopes were occupied by several ranchers. We could see fires break out from these ranch locations and sweep up the slope beyond. It was clearly evident from location of these new fires that the ranchers were starting what they thought to be back fires as a protection to their own property. There is not anything more dangerous than a back fire started by hands of the inexperienced. These fires spread with great rapidity. Finally the expected hurricane broke in all its fury. Local fires burned together and swept through the forest as one vast conflagration. The flames swept across the Pend Oreille River as if it had not been there. The mid-afternoon became dark. The roar of the flames and crash of falling timber could plainly be heard in town. Newport was entirely spared. The flames cut a straight swath to the northward.

The hurricane passed, leaving death and destruction in its wake. Telephone lines were down, and only fragmentary reports were received. No deaths were reported among the forest personnel or firefighters on the Kaniksu. On the following morning I saddled and rode north through the smouldering burn to the summit of the Priest River divide. Only blackened waste could be seen. I returned and started down the river on the west side. The burned area was a tangled mass. The road was completely blocked. I was forced to turn back. All that remained was to salvage what material that could be salvaged from the disaster, and reorganize for a new start. (CLARENCE B. SWIM, Assistant Forest Supervisor, Gallatin National Forest -- Retired 1939)

Our Experience with the Forest Fires

by Mr. Swaine

For days the air had been laden with smoke, flying embers, ashes, singed twigs and moss - some pieces as large as a hand or foot falling promiscuously about. Needles from the fir and pine trees rained profusely through the air, falling like showers upon roofs and the ground. The sound was identical with that of rain. It was evident that fires were raging in almost every direction and that day by day, they were drawing nearer to us. Our constant prayer was for rain.

It has been said the Divine Providence requires His children to prove every word they utter, and in the thirteen years of my residence in the Coeur d'Alene's, it has been a constant boast with me that the wind never blows here; and the frequent, abundant, delightful showers keep everything fresh, lovely and beautiful. But alas! The wind CAN blow in Idaho and weeks can pass without rain as had been proven in the weeks of drought.

In the distance, the reflection of the ruddy glow in the sky and the great crimson sun, seeming to stand out like a gigantic, blood-red orange; a perfect sphere at which one could gaze with ease through the smoke, had been a most beautiful and awe-inspiring sight. The mighty roar of the burning forest resembled the sound of a storm at sea, as expressed by those familiar with that sound. The splendor of the scene was transformed into terror on Saturday, August 20, 1910, when the fires were so near that we were forced to realize that our little village was in imminent danger and that a strong wind might at any moment, prove our destroyer. Before three o'clock p.m., it became so dark from smoke, we were obliged to turn on the lights. Bats flew about thinking the night had arrived, and indeed it was enough to make anyone batty. The air became hot and oppressive and the reflection of fires all around us made danger feel uncomfortably near. The falling fragments were now veritible brands, many of the great twigs bearing live fire; and all agreed that our worst fears were about to be realized. Groups of men began congregating at street corners discussing the scene and a sort of reverential silence seemed to have settled upon the place. About five o'clock the business houses and streets were given a thorough soaking by means of the fire hose, as had been done each day for weeks. Every dwelling received a similar application with a garden hose and from that moment, it was a constant conflict with a furious enemy for two nights and two days. With the evening came the wind from the south carrying the Red Terror toward us. Telephones became active, people began discussing the situation seriously, and altogether, a spirit of intense alarm supplanted that of awe. Among those mighty mountains which seemed one mass of flames were many precious lives, we knew, fire fighters and prospectors, and we wondered how they could possibly escape.

Night came on with its added darkness. The screeching, fiendish roar of the fire increased. The flames were headed right for us. Wallace, the metropolis of the Coeur d'Alene's, just seven miles west was suffering a worse fate. That town was already on fire, and believing the outlet eastward most accessible, hospital inmates and women and children were hurried by special trains, through Mullan toward Missoula. Many of our frightened inhabitants, mostly women and children, took advantage of these trains and left our stricken town. It was noticeable that the few men who chose to go, were the foreign element employed in the mines, who had nothing to lose but could carry in a suitcase their savings which would eventually drift back to the fatherland regardless of conditions .

Our brave, courageous citizens turned out enmasse and successfully backfired the path of the flames and by three o'clock a.m., Sunday morning, danger from that direction seemed over, but half of Wallace had been wiped out, the wind had changed and their fire was traveling this way. As yet, the river was between it and us. Telephone poles had burned as well as part of the railroad track, cutting off all communication aside from what could be ascertained by messengers on horseback.

About five o'clock a.m., the wind subsided and danger seeming over for the moment, the worn citizens started home for a few hours' rest when their attention was arrested by an appalling sight. Thirteen burned, blackened, almost charred men, holding their painful hands in the air, scarcely knowing how or where they were going, yet aiming for one goal, the physician's office, came hastening into town. They were firefighters who had been sent out days before, to arrest, if possible, the progress of the fires. All but two succeeded in reaching town, but the agonies of these poor men can only be realized by those who witnessed their writhings and expressions. Two physicians, assisted by willing volunteers, hastily did all that was possible to relieve their suffering. A temporary hospital was prepared in a vacant store building and the wants of the sufferers satisfied as far as circumstances permitted.

By eight o'clock a.m., the wind resumed its zeal from the west. The fire jumped the river and was covering the ranges west of us and traveling northward. The heat, smoke and humidity were almost unbearable. Conveyances of every description were pressed into service and women and children hurried across the burned district to special trains west of Wallace waiting to carry refugees to safety. The day was like a horrible night, but through the trying hours was that dread of another even more terrible night to come. All too soon it came and those of us who witnessed it, have termed it the "Night of Terror".

The wind came up with a fury. It seemed to blow in whirls carrying sparks in every direction, but the general trend was northeast. As if by magic, new fires would spring up, here, there and everywhere. In every direction, a mountain of flame faced us. One side of a gulch would be aflame and in an instant the fire would be borne across to the other side, and by leaps and bounds from tree to tree, the terrible destruction continued.

Those familiar with the location of our little village, can, in a measure, picture the scene. Others never can. The mountains so high and steep with the narrow gulches between, resembled curtains of fire suspended from the clouds. Absolute property loss seemed positive but we believed our lives could be saved.

Every emergency reaches a crises; and when the extremity arrives, the last resort is adopted. Consequently, when fires had completely surrounded us, and were crowding within a few feet of our doors, and sparks raining like water, it was unanamously agreed that the town must surely go unless the entire west, north and east could be protected by backfires. The tops of the mountains in these directions were already a mightly billow of flame showering their sparks and brands upon the town below.

Those familiar with forest fires, know how much faster fires travel up than down a mountain side. Hence a fire started almost against the houses would travel with a fury up the hillside meeting the surging flames in the timber thus clearing the space passed over and leaving a burned district upon which burning fragments might fall without danger. If backfires take the desired course, all is well; but should they be reversed or misdirected by the wind as is often the case, they are only an added menace. It took courage to start more fires with surrounding country already a sea of fire and the wind a veritible fury but it was our only chance; so a line of men were stationed just a few feet apart, forming a letter s, from the Morning to the Hunter mills, just a few feet in the rear of the buildings. At the signal each started a blaze. These fires united in less time than it takes to relate it, and traveled up the mountains, leaping, foaming, rippling over the brush and grass, then bursting into crimson towers as they passed over stately pines and firs. It was a most beautiful sight yet a most terrible one. The mountains south were still on fire. There was now no outlet. Fancy a deep bowl which is completely lined with seething flames, yourself a spectator in the center, and you can in some degree conceive the scene. The screeching, furious howl of the fire, the heat and grandeur withal, was suggestive of the infernal regions, something unreal, unnatural; as our dear, calm Scotch friend who was so unfortunate as to be our guest at that time, expressed is "uncanny". Much of the smoke was carried onward by the high wind. Midnight was as light as day. The mountains never appeared so high as with their blanket of fire and never impressed us as such barriers.

At last the morning dawned. The wind subsided, and with the dawn, our prayers of gratitude went forth. The terror had passed. Not a precious life had been sacrificed and not a home consumed. It seemed too good to be true. We could scarcely believe it ourselves. We found people asking us and ourselves asking each other how the town had escaped when the fire had passed right over our heads. The reply is as follows: The water supply was unlimited and was most economically and advantageously used;

the constant drenching prior to the arrival of the fire and during its presence made things less tangible, but last and best of all was the united, well-managed, thoroughly systematized course pursued by the volunteer fire department and willing citizens, headed and superintended throughout by William Coumerilh, whose council was sought in every instance and whose advice was at no moment disregarded. He seemed to be everywhere at all times with encouragement and assistance for the tireless workers who toiled with him three days and two nights without a moments sleep or rest.

An admirable feature of the entire ordeal, was the calm, stolid reserve which seemed implanted within each soul. With absolute ruin, destruction and poverty, possibly death staring people in their faces, there was no indication of hysteria or a panic at any time.

You will wonder what we were doing all this time.. Our guest, Mrs. Swaine, the children and I spent our time serving meals to the firefighters who could not leave their posts except in small relays. However, there came an hour when we bade farewell to the little home, the heat and smoke forcing our departure, and sought a place of safety each with a blanket for protection, quite reconciled to the loss of everything if only our lives might be spared. We took refuge in the schoolhouse - a brick structure situated on a roomy cleared space near the river. This we thought would be the last place to burn although there was danger of suffocation. We remained only about three hours when we returned duly and truly thankful for the tableful of dirty dishes which greeted us, and truly thankful for a sink in which to wash them. We all felt very benevolent after the ordeal and allowed the vagrant livestock, driven as we had been from their homes, to graze unmolested upon our lawns. And we realized as never before, how affliction reduces us to a common level. We had all been one united in a single cause, that of saving our all, be it a pocket knife, a home or a fortune. And I echo Mrs. Swaine's remark: "It was a terrible ordeal, but I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

F
CONTROL
Suppression
1910 Fires

W. P. Hillman

During the summer of 1910, the writer was assigned to the Clarksfork district of the Pend Oreille Forest as Forest Guard, along with Jimmie Thornton, Arlie Decker, Uel McCurry, and Lyle Prather, all having just completed our Freshman course in Forestry at the U. of I. We were organized as a trail crew to cut trail up Lightning Creek, beginning at a point 6 miles north of the town of Clarksfork. However, before we had really made a start on the trail work fire broke out in reproduction near the town of Clarksfork, and we were called in to fight it. From that time until the end of the season the trail crew was fighting fire. They were split up after the first fire , some being assigned to patrol old fires, and some placed in charge of fire crews. Just prior to the blow-up on the Coeur d'Alene Forest, or approximately August 15, 1910, Thornton and I had charge of the Dry Creek fire near Cabinet, Idaho, one in charge of the night crew and the other the day crew. The fire was nearly under control when Thornton obtained permission from the supervisor to go to his home in Coeur d'Alene to attend the wedding of his sister who was to sail for Alaska to make her home immediately after the wedding. On the same day, or the day before, I was called into the Supervisor's office to assist in the clerical work and in rustling fire crews. Thornton left one of the crew foremen in charge to finish corraling the Dry Creek fire, and Billy Brashear, a patrolman for that district, was also to keep an eye on the fire.

On August 21, the crew was working on the fire when Billy Brashear on patrol noticed a wall of fire and smoke break over the divide from the Coeur d'Alene side and head down towards the Dry Creek fire on Pend Oreille. He realized the danger and rode with all possible speed via saddle horse to where the crew was working, had them throw down their tools and run back to camp which was in a clearing near the road leading to Cabinet. He ordered them all to wet their blankets, lie down in the middle of the meadow and cover themselves with the blankets. They all obeyed but two men, who were greatly excited over the fire which was roaring down upon them. They failed to estimate the speed the fire was traveling, and stated they were going to beat the fire to Cabinet, a distance of about four miles. However, they only traveled a few hundred yards down the road before the fire overtook them. Deputy Supervisor Eddie Stahl, and Ranger John Keefe made their way into the fire camp late that evening when the worst of the crown fire was over and came upon the two dead bodies in the road where the fire had overtaken them. The balance of the crew, who remained in the clearing, came through all right, except that the eyes of some of them were badly inflamed by smoke and heat.

The names of the two men burned are no doubt in the files of the Pend-

Oreille Forest. I believe one of them was Post.

I first met "Cap" Wilhite that summer at Sandpoint. He had been sent there by the Fiscal Agent as special disbursing agent to pay off fire fighters. Believe me, he was busy, both day and night, and is probably suffering now with his eyes as a result of long hours on just such work. (Some time slips were hard to read.)

Since there was no provision made for the Government to bury their fire fighter dead at that time, the supervisor, Mr. J. E? Barton, took up a collection from the members of the Pend Oreille force to pay the undertaker. The graves were dug by Forest officers.

If I am not mistaken, the Forester called for contributions from all Service members to pay funeral expenses of the men killed on the Coeur d'Alene.

THE GREAT FIRES OF 1910

by

William W. Morris

Never within the memory of all the old timers did the Coeur d'Alene experience such a dry spell as occurred during the summer of the year 1910. Even as early as April the south slopes were quickly relieved of their snow burdens, and became quite dry. A fire was reported to the office on one of these slopes the latter part of that month. A few scattering showers in May and June about completed the sum total of the rainfall for the summer.

Returning from another hard trip up the Coeur d'Alene River by pole boat in early July, I was taking a somewhat needed rest in the office, by writing up reports, etc. when Professor Kirkwood from the University of Montana made us a visit. As he wanted to make a study of the flora found upon our forest, I was very much pleased when the supervisor asked me to accompany him on his trip, and show him some of our more accessible timbered areas. July 13, 1910 saw us climbing the top of Striped Peak, about five miles from the city of Wallace, and reached by what is known as the West Fork trail. It was a beautiful day, but quite hot and dry with a stiff south west wind. We arrived at the top of Striped Peak, which has an elevation of over six thousand three hundred feet, about lunch time. We had hardly sat down on the top of the peak to eat our lunch when I noticed smoke in the southwest. I took a compass shot in the direction of this smoke and then sat down to finish our lunch. As we were eating smoke suddenly appeared in the southeast, and fanned by the gale that was blowing quickly developed into what looked to be a stiff fire. Looking carefully in the direction of the other fire we also detected smoke, a thin narrow band of it, in the southwest but nearer than the first one we had seen. This was too much. It was necessary to report these fires at once and postpone, for a time at least, our trip. Hastily taking a compass shot on the three fires and estimating their distance as near as possible, I plotted them approximately without the aid of a protractor, on my map, and we started on the return trip to Wallace.

At that time no telephones connected this peak with the office, as is now the case with all of the mountain peaks that command a good view of the country. Before descending we took a look at the fire in the wouteast. It was coming our way rapidly, and although possibly twenty miles away, it seemed as if it might be at our mountain peak in a short time. Little did I think as we left that high point that day, a point commanding a view of timbered slopes and canyons, bare peaks and green ridges, stretching away as far as the eye could reach, that it would be my last view of this beautiful panorama of green clad hills. The next time I was to behold it again it was with a feeling of great sorrow, sorrow for a fallen race whose scattered and broken remains lay spread out before me. The greenness had vanished. The canyons and hillsides were covered with a twisted mass of broken blackened trees, in some places five trees deep. It reminded me of jackstraws more than anything else. Great pines almost two hundred feet long were there, broken, twisted and fallen, the product of hundreds of years of slow but sure accumulation of food from the earth and air. What a sad sight it all was for one who had viewed the same country from this spot only a few months before.

We reached the forest office in Wallace in the afternoon. The stenographer said that the supervisor had already gone out on a fire. The fires we had seen had all been reported, and action taken. From then on until about eleven o'clock that night, the telephone was going continually, either the same or other fires being reported from various sources. Thus the fires had caught us all at once, and from then on until the middle of September it was one continual fight, though at that time we did not know it was to be. The next day I was sent out to one of the fires that we had sighted the day before from Striped Peak. This fire was on the North Fork of the Coeur d'Alene river about thrity two miles from Wallace by rail. Professor Kirkwood was to accompany me. I was to stay until the fire was under control, then go on up the river with Professor Kirkwood. It was thought it would probably take a day or two to control this fire. It took just fifty five days and nights. The one daily combination freight and passenger train took us up the river quite near the scene of the fire where the Graham Creek Ranger Station was, and is still located. A small stream emptied into the river at this point, and it was up this stream the fire was burning. With the ranger from the station we started for the scene immediately. A road led for about two miles up the canyon along this little stream. Three settlers had taken up claims in this canyon some time before. The fire originated probably from burning brush from the furthermost claim, about two to three miles up the stream. It had started the day before we arrived, and conditions were just right to give the fire a great start up the mountainside. At the first cabin about one mile up, some young ladies from Spokane had been visiting. Their suitcases full of clothing were still in the stream where they had thrown them the day before, in their hurry to leave the place. As it happened it was not until about fifteen days later that anybody on this little road would have been in any great peril. The fire was burning quite near the second cabin, and that afternoon we confined our efforts to stopping it at that point, which we did temporarily. Only a few men were working, and we all had to turn to with axes and mattocks. Professor Kirkwood proved himself to be an expert with the mattock, as well as in the classification of plants. A camp down the river had promised to send up a big gang of men, but they did not arrive until the following day. When they finally came I divided them up into two groups, one going up to the head of the fire, another group working to head it off in some valuable timber on the slope just over the ridge from the second cabin. These fire lines eventually met. Most of the men were foreigners and not highly satisfactory. We had a crew of about sixty all told. In making a fire line axes and crosscut saws are first employed to clear away all windfall and dead stubs, and these are followed up by men with mattocks who clear a trail exposing the mineral soil, about three feet wide. Patrol men are sent back on this trail as it is increased in length, to keep sparks and fire brands from blowing over it, or to put out fires caused by these being blown over the line, before they have developed into a large fire. Usually these fire lines are constructed a little to the lee side of a ridge, as it offers a favorable place to fight a fire, and it will run down hill on the lee side much slower than it comes up on the other.

Everything was going along favorably except the weather. It seemed as if it could not rain. Several times clouds appeared that under ordinary circumstances would have poured rain copiously, but not so this year. After getting a fire line around the fire on the east slope of the canyon, we tackled the west slope, where a fire had been burning lightly in some small timber. That day the wind came up strongly, and scattered fire

everywhere. However we were enabled by working several nights to get a fire line up to the top of the divide, on the west side of the creek, so it was kept for the time being from going down towards the mouth. Many of the men had left or were unsatisfactory, so I went about the last part of July to Wallace to get hold of some more men. I returned with twenty nine. Conditions were then bad in Wallace. The air was filled with smoke and fires were raging everywhere in the mountains. Our supervisor was almost exhausted with the strenuous work, both night and day. I met a man on the train when going to Wallace, an old timer, with whom I conversed relative to the fires. He said "We will be all right as long as we don't get one of those 'Palousers" lasting about three days, which would scatter our fires everywhere now that it is so dry." Now a "Palouser" this time referred to a gale of wind from the Palouse country which strikes the whole region occasionally. The Palouse country is famous for its wheat, and the wind picks up the fine red soil and carries it for miles, filling one's throat and nose and covering everything with a fine powder. Fortunately these are rare and the country is usually calm, with very few violent storms. But this year one of these was to come along with many other things. The wind is one of the new chief factors in fire fighting. When the wind blows hard and other conditions are right, the fire leaps up into the crowns of the trees, and travels along at a great pace, by brands blowing ahead of it and starting new fires. When it is quiet one may work quite close to a fire, but let the wind blow, and it is necessary to keep a respectful distance. It is also well to get on a fire early in the morning for this is usually the coolest and quietest time of the day, and the dew has a tendency to check the fire.

At this time we had only one small fire that was not under control. This was burning in a small area of rather poor timber on the east side of Graham Creek but nearer its mouth than we had been before. But this fire was to be our downfall, for it was in an old slashing, and a wind came up strongly the day we attacked it, and soon it was leaping and rushing over our fire line in all directions, but mainly towards the mouth of the stream. We could do nothing with it. Bringing down the men we put forth all our endeavors keeping it on the east side of the stream. Here for the first time we had a chance to use water, its natural enemy. But it was no use. Looking up on the west slope we suddenly saw smoke, and in a short time this side was a roaring furnance, travelling rapidly down towards the mouth of the creek, and threatening to shut off our escape in this direction. Men worked like heroes that day. I remember one man a "lumberjack" who had come to the camp drunk. I had hesitated to employ him, but being short of men at the time took him. I will always remember how that man dashed into the fire with buckets of water or shovels of earth, as cool as a cucumber, doing everything that human power could do and much more than most human power. The men called him Patsy, and I will always be grateful to Patsy for his strenuous endeavors against such great odds, as well as to many other faithful ones. It was necessary for us to get out of the canyon now in a hurry, and running through some fire that was already before us we reached the railroad. At the mouth of the stream just before coming to the railroad track was a small schoolhouse (Graham Creek School near the Prichard Ranger Station). The fire was there as quick as we were. As we lay down on the track exhausted I remember hearing the school bell give a final clang as it fell to the ground, its supports being eaten away by the tongues of fire. As the fire came down the west side of the stream toward the mouth of the river the timber was uprooted at just about the time the flame struck it. The falling trees caused a continual roar,

and in some places were thrown in rough whirls, resembling the work of a tornado. Arriving at the mouth of the stream, the fire jumped the railroad tracks and river, and started burning in a flat on the opposite side about an eighth of a mile from the mouth of the stream where we had heretofore confined it. On this flat was a cabin belonging to a logging camp, and in this cabin were several boxes of giant powder. This we buried in the river, so that no sparks could get at it.

Taking a much needed rest that night, we began early the next morning to fight the fire on the flat. Had it gotten away from here the whole upper river would have been threatened. The fire jumped the main Coeur d'Alene river and threatened the Grizzlies. Fortunately we were able to get a fire line around it the first day. Once it jumped the fire line, and for a moment the upper river seemed doomed, but by quick work this danger was avoided. The next few days our efforts were confined to stopping the fire on the west side on the river slope. After building several miles of fire line, only to have the fire jump over it in spite of all efforts, we finally succeeded in running a fire line to the summit of the slope, taking advantage of a rock slide part of the way. Here we stopped it completely on the western front. The watershed in which we had been fighting the fire was now almost burned over. So far however we had confined this fire within it, with the exception of some small areas on the main river. It was away up at the head of this watershed on the east side that the danger now threatened, for the fire had jumped over our lines, and was threatening the large watershed of beautiful timber to the east. We established a camp on this high ridge, separating the two watersheds, and cut a fire line along it. This camp was not in a very desirable place as far as water and provisions were concerned, for everything had to be packed in with horses, and for a time it was necessary to carry the water on our backs with five gallon water bags that we had for that purpose. A logging camp was situated in the watershed below us, and possibly three miles away to the east, nearer the main Coeur d'Alene river. From here our supplies were packed by pack horses coming to camp every two or three days. It was necessary for us first to build a "shotgun" trail as they call a very rough trail in that country, and this was so steep in some parts it was hard for a pack horse to get over it, even with a moderate load.

About this time a man appeared for work who said he had been a cook. We had been bothered a great deal heretofore by not being able to get a man who knew the art of cooking for a crew of men in the "open." Formerly we had done a good deal of the cooking at the ranger station, and at one of the cabins in the watershed below. I determined therefore to give this man a try, and he proved to be a wonder, and soon had order out of former chaos. He had a place for everything, and built a fireplace with stone he found on the mountain top. He had the men line up for their meals, and dished it out to them in a lordly manner as they passed in review. He could turn out some dishes that would make some of our fine hotel chefs take notice, and with very little in the line of provisions or dishes to do it with and under the most trying circumstances.

We were situated on a bare ridge, with a lodgepole thicket a little way below us. The men built Indian "tepees" with this young lodgepole, and we looked for all the world like an Indian village stuck away up there on the top of a high ridge.

There were a great many bears on this ridge, attracted there probably by the huckleberries that grew in great profusion, and which sometime stayed our thirst, when water was not obtainable. One of the boys in his spare moments made a bear trap of logs. This was made in the nature of a figure four, the bear having to crawl under a heavy log to get the bait. On eating this bait, stick holding the heavy log would release, and allow it to fall on the unfortunate bear. But we were destined not to have any bear meat, much as we wanted fresh meat, for although Mr. Bruin got into the trap one time, he managed to pull himself out.

One time we had been out of bread for some days, and the packer had promised to relieve the situation on his next trip. Bread of some kind is essential to the happiness of camp life. We all were looking forward to the packer's coming. He finally arrived one day, and after unloading the faithful horses, a few of us who happened to be in camp exclaimed, "But where is the bread?" The packer said he had brought about three dozen loaves, but that the pack horse carrying it had slipped off the trail on a steep rocky hillside, had rolled over a couple of times, and the bread had scattered in all directions. He had succeeded in getting the horses on the trail again, but he had not been able to pick up the bread, as some of the horses had continued on ahead, and he was afraid of losing them. Accordingly I threw my packsack over my shoulders and went down the trail in search of a few loaves. I found the point at which the horse had slipped off the rocky slope, and soon began to pick up scattered loaves. It reminded me of picking up manna in the wilderness, or stories I had read of bread-fruit trees. The loaves were scattered over a distance of more than an eighth of a mile, as the hill was very steep. I had picked up possibly twenty loaves, and was about to leave when I decided I would climb a tree and take a careful look around. Something caught my eye a way down the hill. I went down to it, and there was one of the boxes that had been packed on the pack horse. All around this box were scattered loaves of bread, and I believe I must have picked up a dozen more at this place. This was quite a find, and I returned to camp with a bulging pack sack and rather proud of my ability to secure bread in the wilderness.

Thus passed the first stage of operations at this camp, days of most strenuous toil on the part of everyone, but days which I can now look back to with somewhat of a feeling of pleasure, for the fire at that time was under control, and the life in the camp went along smoothly. But this was the calm before the storm. It had been a fight against nature from the beginning, and so far it looked as if we were getting the best of it. But soon nature was to show us what she was capable of doing when in her rougher moods.

It was near the twentieth of August and our fires had been surrounded by well made fire lines and things looked fairly favorable. But it was extremely dry, so much so that the soil was like powder, and a spark dropped at any point would quickly start a conflagration.

On the afternoon of the nineteenth of August I walked down to the ranger station, to talk over the situation with Ranger Schneider. Our fires were smouldering, but I felt they were under control. The following morning the ranger and I started for the fire camp. The wind was fresh in the early morning and strengthening every minute. When we reached the camp it was blowing a gale. Our "Palouser" had arrived. With great rapidity the smouldering fires below began to gather headway, and in a few minutes

had gone over our ridge below the camp with a mighty roar, and down into the watershed we had been working all the summer to protect. But it was necessary for us to get busy now to protect our camp and ourselves. We cleared a place on the ridge where we placed all the provisions. We made a fire line below in the lodgepole thicket, but while doing this the fire jumped up into the crowns of the trees, and the head axeman was almost suffocated. We had to abandon this fire line and confine our attention to work on the ridge above our camp, where the fire was threatening to come over.

It was getting late and I was strongly hoping the wind would die down with the coming of night as it so often does. But there was no let up this time. It was blowing about sixty miles an hour now from the southwest. Our work on the ridge above us was in vain, for with a rush the fire was upon us at this point, then over. No human means could stop it now. Over the ridge it went into our precious timber below. The work of the summer was undone, at least I thought so then. We were too in a somewhat serious predicament. Fire had gone over our ridge below us in the morning, and above us in the evening. Trees were falling and burning on these areas continually. Our food supply was covered with sand and dirt. The men were called in. We sat down and ate what we could.

Never had any of us seen such a wild sight. In the direction of the city of Wallace great masses of smoke were blowing wildly up the valley of the South Fork. Southward toward the St. Joe River stood a great white cloud pillar, apparently still, looking like a great thunder cap, or the steam cloud that attends the eruption of a volcano. Many of the men thought it was a cloud and predicted rain at last. Westward the sun was setting in a flying black mass, looking like a great red ball of fire. Our high ridge gave us a wonderful view. The weird scene greatly impressed them, and one could not help having the feeling of fear and awe which the scene produced, as if a great tragedy was about to happen. Many fire fighters from other parts spoke of this later. They said the very air was afire. And tragedy was taking place in all these regions.

At Wallace at this time women and children and the sick from the hospitals were crowding the cars to escape the wall of flame that rolled down the mountainside that same afternoon and burned almost a third of the town. Where the great white pillar of smoke hung townships of timber were being consumed, great trees were being uprooted and snapped in pieces by the thousands with a mighty roar that could be heard for miles, and many a brave fire fighter met his doom on that fateful day and the day following. In all, about eighty men perished in this great fire at our camp.

The wind continued to blow all night. Most of the men, dead tired, turned into their lodgepole shacks. The situation however looked too serious to make me think of sleep. At nine o'clock it was apparent that something must be done. The men were awakened, and each one told to take his blankets and other belongings, and start off down the ridge. Two of us buried all the tools we could find. Our provisions had already been put together in an open space.

It was rather dangerous work going through the fire in the dark on the ridge below, where trees were still burning and falling, from the fire that had passed over in the morning. The trail was completely obliterated by fallen trees, and in the darkness was hard to follow. We made it all

right and after walking several miles, lay down on the ground and slept until morning. I was awakened by one of the night patrol men coming in. "Say," he said, "you ought to see our old camp, there is nothing left of her." I went back and took a look. The lodgepole shacks, provisions and all tools that had been left were completely gone, and the ridge was swept bare. A few tools had been left near the provisions, in the cleared open space, yet only the iron parts were left showing with what heat this fire had rushed over our camp.

We were indeed fortunate to have escaped so well. It was necessary that something be done at once. The men had had very little supper, no breakfast, and no dinner was in sight. They were worn out from overwork, and lack of water both for drinking and washing purposes. Sending some men down to the logging camp for provisions, I went to the ranger station to see what I could get and report the situation to the Wallace office, and try and get some more men to tackle the fire again. Supervisor Weigle answered my telephone call. He said "The situation is serious. A great deal of Wallace has been burned, and our ranger here (Pulaski) has lost six men in a tunnel. I can't send any more men. You will have to do the best you can without them." I got several loaves of bread at the ranger station, and hastened back to camp. It was a dark day and the sun was hidden, as it was for many days following.

When I arrived at camp, I found most of the men leaving. I was unable to make them stay by either persuasion or force. However some of the faithful few stuck, among whom was my cook fortunately. We made arrangements with the foreman of the logging camp to get a line around the lower part of the fire, which was now burning in the watershed where the logging was being done, and we attacked the fire at the top and finally connected up with their fire lines. A patrol was established on these new lines, which formed a circle four or five miles long, and on completion of their trip around the circle the patrol man would report at the camp. The wind continued to blow for four days, gradually slacking on the last day and getting colder, so that the fire went down greatly. It was traveling down hill, and protected from the wind, as well as being on the more moist eastern slope, so we soon had it under control again.

The last few days on the fire in camp on the high ridge I look back to with somewhat of a feeling of pleasure. The weather had changed. It was getting colder and a feeling of approaching autumn was in the air. Everybody seemed to feel that their hard work was nearly over, and their spirits rose accordingly. Around the campfire at night I had a chance to size up my crew. A number of men who had been with me all through the fire were there. One was a young Englishman who had fought in the Boer war. He could tell many exciting stories of his experiences, and also was quite a poet and singer. Often he held the attention of the whole camp as he recited bits of poetry of his own composition, or sang some old English airs. There were also two Montenegrins who were the best workers I had, and they had been with me from the first. They were very faithful and never seemed to get tired. One time one of these men was carrying water for the camp in two five gallon water bags. He had a hard climb up a steep trail, but there was not water enough for all the men to wash. "That all right, I get some more" he said, and though it was late and he had been working hard since early morning, back he went for more water. We also had two southern boys with us from South Carolina. They were a different type from most of the others, but good workers. They were out for a trip to get adventure and experience in the West, and I believe they went home satisfied.

Another young fellow who had been one of the foremen throughout the fire was with (Guard Burk, later a ranger). He was the wag of the camp, and always making the men laugh with his jokes. I remember he said in regard to our first cook, "He was so greasy that every morning he had to roll in the ashes of the fire to keep from sliding down the hill."

On the night of September fourth raindrops on our faces awakened us. First only a few fell, and then, increasing, it soon began to come down quite heavily. We lay there and enjoyed it. We were glad to get wet, for we knew our long fight was over. The next day the rain continued, so we broke up our camp, and I bid an affectionate farewell to the faithful crew, the men going on their various ways, most of them never to see each other again. I returned to Wallace, where the people were just recovering from the effects of the fire, which had burned a large part of the town. The hills surrounding the city, which formerly had been so green and beautiful, were now bare and black.

One of the first things that we found it necessary to do after the fire was to clear out our old trails. Most of these were absolutely impassable, and not an easy matter. Gangs of men were out on this work all the fall. Great tree trunks were piled across the trails in twisted and broken tangles, often five trees high, and it was necessary to cut through all this with axe and saw. This work took much time and money.

K. Personal
Phillips, Roy A.

by Roy A. Phillips

8-23-10

There follows a narrative of my experiences on the night of August 20, 1910, when a holocaust of fire swept over North Idaho and Western Montana, causing irreparable damage through the loss of forest resources and human life.

Perhaps as a prelude it might be well to mention briefly the history of the season as I recollect it. The winter of 1910 was not deficient in snow, at least at high elevations. On April 4, 1910, I left Missoula with a timber reconnaissance party of which T. C. Spaulding, then Deputy Supervisor of the Lelo Forest, was in charge. We worked all during April and the first half of May on the head waters of the St. Regis River and the snow was four to six feet deep at the beginning of job and packed so solid that we were able to work without snowshoes practically through the entire period.

After May 15 there was very little rain in that region and about June 1 a fire occurred on the N. P. Railroad near Lookout Pass. This occurrence was the official opening of the fire season and from that time on fires occurred regularly.

I was assigned for the summer to the territory between Lookout Pass and Saltese, Montana, my principal duty being to patrol the railroad track between these two points daily on foot, which was a man-sized job. Later in the season I was furnished a railroad velocipede and I could then cover my patrol so easily that I remember making three round trips one day. Occasionally I would relieve the monotony of the patrol by making trips out on the Montana, Idaho State line and around to St. Paul Pass and down on the Milwaukee Railway

to Saltese. This was a hard day's trip but gave me an opportunity to get an excellent view of my territory and to locate any fires that might be burning back away from the railroad.

Fires occurred every day or so on either the N. P. or C. M. & St. P. Railway right-of-ways and during the season I handled thirty-five or thirty-six fires individually and succeeded in keeping them all under Class C size, or under ten acres. I was fortunate in being able to organize the railroad section crews into efficient firefighting units and to this one thing can attribute my success in handling the situation. On the Milwaukee Railroad steam shovel fires were particularly bad and I would call out tank cars and extra gangs from all over the division when conditions warranted.

Early in July one or two light electrical storms occurred unaccompanied by rain and these storms set widely scattered fires over the region. One of these fires smouldered three weeks on Hilda Creek before showing up and then burst out into a severe crown fire that covered about seventy-five acres before being controlled. Hovey Polleys, son of E. H. Polleys of Missoula, was struck by a falling tree on this fire and almost instantly killed.

Another fire started from lightning near the Bullion Mine on what then was the Coeur d'Alene Forest and burned perhaps ten days before men were placed on it. I kept reporting this fire to the Supervisor's office at Wallace but apparently all available men

were on fire so I finally ordered a twenty-five man crew from Missoula and work was started on the fire under the direction of John S. Baird then Lumberman for District One. The fire finally gained such proportions that I was taken off patrol and given a fire crew on the north and east sides of the fire. The Coeur d'Alene Forest had by that time also organized a crew on the Idaho side at the Bullion Mine.

On August 20 I had completed a fire line to the state line and my crew had been reduced to a patrol basis. Baird had a crew on the south side of the fire and was having some trouble in holding his line. S. M. Taylor, foreman for the Bullion Crew, and now County Commissioner of Shoshone County, had all but about a mile or mile and a half of the west side of the fire trenched. I had been around the fire a day or two previously and it was apparently in good shape and not a great deal of line was being lost. The fire had of course been projected by this time and J. E. Brøen, Ranger, stationed at Taft was is charge.

The day of August 20 differed very little from preceding days, there was little wind noticeable and there was no premonition of the calamity about to occur. My crew had a hard job holding a section of line under the fire on a precipitous slope and it took us until dark to get everything in good shape to leave for the night. Even in those days we had discovered the futility of leaving out night patrolmen except in extreme instances and I took all my crew into camp that night, which proved to be a very fortunate circumstance. As we had no lanterns or other means of a light, I recollect

that it was so dark that we could only follow the fire line with difficulty, one man getting lost in the brush and it was some job to get him back on the line.

About nine-thirty, while we were on our way into camp, we were startled by a burning brand apparently a couple of feet long that hurtled down out of the sky a hundred yards from the camp. I sent two men from the camp to locate this phenomenon and hastily got something to eat and went to bed, dog tired.

At midnight, or shortly after, the night cook woke me up probably alarmed by the noise that the relief train from Wallace was making on its way east--the engineer was blowing the whistle intermittently to warn people to be ready to leave. However, the train did not wait for us, although there were in the neighborhood of 150 men in camp. By this time, the flames were beginning to show on the horizon and the roar of the fire was becoming audible. I speedily awakened several men I knew were dependable and went over to the point on the railroad where our supplies were unloaded to take care of some provisions unloaded late the previous afternoon. We accomplished our object and were returning to the camp with four or five water barrels that the railroad company had sent out for use on bridges when we met the entire crew badly demoralized, and apparently leaving the country. The fire by this time was an awe-inspiring spectacle, the whole horizon to the west was aflame and the noise caused by the falling timber was terrific. In addition, our fire was out of control and raging across the lines below us to the south east and our only avenue of escape effectually cut off.

The entire fire crew led by one of the foremen, had conceived the idea of getting into a railroad tunnell at Borax as they thought it was the safest place to escape the fire. Knowing from experience gained traveling through this tunnell on patrol that there was always a strong air cuttent through it, I succeeded in turning back all of the crew but the foreman and one other man and, finding that they were alone, they soon followed us back to the camp ground. On the way, we met Lieut. Titus who had arrived in camp the previous afternoon with a detachment of regular soldiers for the purpose of patrolling the fire lines. He and his men were following up the firefighters as they had no intention of remaining in camp alone. The Lieutenant was agreeable to the plan I suggested of remaining where we were so we returned to camp and speedily constructed a fire line around it and immediately set a backfire which spread rapidly outward drawn by the suction of the main fire.

By this time, the roar of the oncoming fire was so great that it was only with difficulty that conversation could be carried on with a person standing at your side. The vanguard of the fire was sweeping over us and the hills all around us were catching fire and soon were a raging mass of flames. Our backfire had burned out perhaps one or two hundred yards before the main front of the fire struck and when they came together the heated air current filled with cinders swirled down upon us and for a short space of time, that seemed an eternity, we gasped and choked for air and were blinded by smoke. Finally the air cleared and we found that nearly everything inside our fire line was burning that had not been wet down; fortunately the ground was fairly clear of refuse and the build-

ings and tents had all been soaked with water and did not catch fire.

Outside of a few men who were temporarily blinded by smoke, the crew were all in fairly good shape. One man who thought he had gone blind was thwarted in an attempt to take his life. We were also fortunate in having a week's supply of provisions ahead. Every one was too nearly exhausted and weak from the effects of the smoke to be much concerned about anything the first day, and although an attempt was made to get through to the other crews, the ground was still too hot to do so. However, a timekeeper with the Bullion Crew managed to get through with the news that eight of the men in that crew had perished in the Bullion tunnell. I attempted to get through to Saltese with this message and met J. E. Braden coming up on a speeder so returned to camp and Braden went back to Saltese to report. The fire was still burning briskly along the railroad and the chance for suffocation was considerable as it was impossible to tell what one was running into as in places the flames were shooting across the rails and the smoke was blinding. However, I succeeded in getting back to camp and the following day Lieut. Titus, John Baird, and I went into the Bullion Mine, identified the bodies there, wrapped them in blankets and interred them in a long shallow trench, side by side. Several days later Baird and I disinterred three of the bodies, lashed them on horses and took them over to Potsville where we turned them over to a troop of soldiers to take into Wallace. These men were Larry Rigdon, a Wallace miner, and two young men, Leslie Zellers and Val Nicholson from Kellogg. The remaining bodies were disinterred a week or ten days

later, when the railroad resumed operations.

The story of the experience of the men in the Bullion Tunnell is worth recounting. Their first knowledge of the fire came when a section of a limb of a tree as big as a man's forearm fell out of the air, striking a sleeping man on the leg, causing a serious bruise. On awakening, this man perceived the fire coming up Bullion Creek and the crew barely had time to reach the Bullion Tunnell after he awakened them although it was only a short distance from the camp. One member of the crew carried his blankets into the tunnell and it was only through this circumstance that any of the crew were saved. These blankets were stretched across the face of a little drift running off from the main tunnell and all but eight men went into this drift. The other eight men apparently dropped in their tracks and from all appearances, died instantly without any agony or suffering. Of the men in the ~~tunnell~~ drift, several were suffering from the effects of smoke and bad air, but there were no casualties.

The spectacle of this fire was awe-inspiring almost beyond belief and was sufficient to strike terror to the strongest heart; it seemed a hopeless task to attempt anything that would divert the path of so ruthless a monster; many grown men in the crew were absolutely helpless and there were several who could only weep or moan, believing they were doomed. The fact that we were situated on a small knoll fairly clear and sufficiently elevated to alleviate the danger of suffocation, and the fact that our backfire spread so rapidly accounts, I believe, for our pulling through. The water in the stream below us became almost boiling hot and was I judge too hot to be borne had it been necessary to take the water. A dense stand of timber a short

ways from our camp was laid flat to the ground and in places large trees were lifted bodily out of the ground and deposited some little distance from where they originally stood.

Our backfire was responsible for breaking the fury of the main front of the fire and a considerable area back of our camp and in line with the direction of the fire was merely spotted with fire. In this area at daybreak we discovered that there were eight or ten head of deer that showed no signs of fear on approach. They remained around the camp until the ashes had cooled.

On the next day following the fire we took steps to save a railroad bridge and tunnell which were temporarily saved by our back-fire but which would undoubtedly have burned had we not put out the fires that still burned near them.

The devastation that followed the fire was appalling and almost beyond description. Where a majestic forest was standing apparently tranquil and secure the evening before the morning sun dawned upon a scene of utter desolation. Smoking, blackened mountain slopes and tangled masses of windthrown trees dotted the landscape. Trees three feet and over in diameter were in some cases torn bodily out of the ground and thrown some little distance uphill from where they originally stood. Entire drainages covering square miles of country were left without the vestige of a green leaf or twig or the trace of a living thing. The entire topographic aspect of the country was changed, and it was only with extreme difficulty that the burned areas could be traversed without getting lost.

Haun:

Afternoon of August 20th, 1910, until after the fire.

The afternoon of August 20, I went to Borax to get 40 men from Breen to move to Big Creek. On the way up, I remarked to Breen that we were going to have a thunder shower -- there were black clouds rising in the west; and when we got to Borax we were informed that the fire had got away on Pine creek and that was the thunder clouds we saw. So I made arrangements with the forty men to be moved to Big creek the next day, and returned to Saltese that evening. I went to bed about 10 o'clock, and at 11 o'clock one of the patrolmen came to me and told me that the fire was at Borax. I got up and telephoned Wallace, and the wire went down; then I got Mullan on the line and was informed that the fire was all around there at that time, and they were going to leave the telephone. Then I tried to get Missoula, and got Hamilton instead, and all they knew was that there was a big fire; and about ten minutes afterward, that line went out. I went down town and sent messages to all the crews I knew of -- Phillips' and Breen's crews, and told them either to stay where they were, if I considered it safe, or to move to some safe place which I designated; and they did. About that time Breen came in and informed me that it was impossible to hold the camp at Borax, and that they were going to come down. I told him to go back and try to hold Borax camp as it was in a big burn and it was safe, I thought, there. Just as he got to the Borax bridge, he met 50 soldiers and about 70 other men starting out.

He had some time trying to induce them to go back and try to hold the camp. However, they all went back and held the camp and drove the fire around it.

After things had quieted down at Borax, Breen came to Taft and the fire had just got there, so they gathered up what men they could and tried to keep the lumber at the ranger station from burning and some of the buildings at Taft. They drove the fire around Taft and saved one or two buildings, besides most of the lumber at the ranger station.

In the meantime, a relief train from Wallace arrived from Saltese, and there were several empty box cars at Saltese, and we gathered up all the women and children and sent them on toward Missoula, keeping all the men that would stay to fight fire at Saltese. The fire did not arrive at Saltese until the evening of August 21, although it had been smoky all day and we had to pack lanterns around there the same as night.

On the evening of the 21st, Silcox sent down 100 buckets and 40 men by the N.P. relief train. They got in Saltese and decided that it was no place for them and started to pull out. However, the fire had jumped over Saltese and burned the bridges out ahead of them, so when they came back we gathered up the men and strung them out along the fire line. And from about 9:30 in the evening until 11 o'clock that night, with about 70 men in Saltese, we succeeded in driving the fire around the town by backfiring and whipping it out as it came in. We had water and water pails on every building, and ladders on every building.

(Got ahead of my story.)

One the 21st -- during the day of the 21st here, there had been one man at Taft drunk in a building, and he was burned pretty bad, but not seriously. Mr. Breen brought him to Saltese and the doctor wrapped him in absorbent cotton and we put him in a box car and put two men to look after him. Along came a friend of his, and it being dark in the car, he lit a match. The match ignited the absorbent cotton at once and the man jumped up and knocked one of the guards down and ran out on the railroad track. He came running down toward Breen, waving his arms and jumping, all ablaze. We ran up to him and grabbed him and threw him down and put the fire out. We took him back to the box car, and he died in a few minutes.

Shortly after that a reporter came up from Missoula and asked me if I could n't give him some dope about the fire. He stayed around there a few minutes, and I want over to the north part of town, and when I came back he was crawling into the N. P. water tank. I guess that is the reason there was n't much dope written about the Saltese fire in the Missoulian.

About 11 o'clock the wind changed to the north, and we completed the fire line around the town, and dismissed everybody, except twenty-five patrolmen.

The Borax crew had not been heard from, and two other men and myself were detailed to go over and find them - over at the head of *** (?) creek on the St. Joe. On our way over,

we met them coming out and came back to Saltese with them.*

Other crews were handled as follows:

Camp, Middle Fork of Big creek with 40 men; These men were in charge of Forest Assistant Clifford, and they all piled on the relief train and went in to Missoula.

Beyer - Gilt Edge creek - 30 men; ordered to stay there.

Hayes, Monitor Mine, 35 men; order to come to head of Gilt Edge creek. These were the only crews that were in any danger, outside of two where Breen was.

Phillips had one crew - 50 soldiers - at Borax.

The big problem after the fires was to rig up some place to feed the men and get supplies in. All the store-keepers and butcher-shop men had left town, so we had no difficulty in getting all the supplies there were in Saltese.

Out of the whole 1910 fire fighting there was n't a man hurt enough to lay him up temporarily for a day or two, except young Polleys who was killed early in July by a falling tree. Hayes, at the Monitor Mine, was a deputy supervisor on the Gallatin. He took his men right with him; told them he had authority to use a six-shooter, and there were only two or three of them that rebelled.** I sent a messenger, but succeeded in getting Hayes on the telephone before he arrived. Sent a messenger up Big Creek and he got there all right; traveled two miles but had lots of time to make it. Messenger knew the way all right and guided them. This messenger was a good live kid: the minute he heard of the fire he rushed over and woke me up.

Saved the bunch. I just picked him up. He was beating his way on a freight train, and I asked the conductor if there were any hobos on there, and he was amongst the bunch. Had five of them and they proved to be good workers. -- Twenty bridges and twenty-one trestles were burned out.

Notes for preceding page.

* I wonder if this could have been Halm's crew.

** As I remember it, these men wished to seek shelter in a neayby tunnel.

Forty years later, Betty Goodwin Spencer - a north Idaho author - gave this account of Aug. 20, 1910:

"The forests staggered, rocked, exploded and then shriveled under the holocaust. Great red balls of fire rolled up the mountainsides. Crown fires, from one to 10 miles wide, streaked with yellow and purple and scarlet, raced through treetops 150 feet from the ground. Bloated bubbles of gas burst murderously into forked and greedy flames.

"The heat of the fire and the masses of flaming gas created whirlwinds that mowed down mile-wide swaths of pine and fir and cedar in advance of the flames. And behind all this, advancing ominously and steadily, destroying everything in its path - the ground fire.

"Fire brands the size of a man's arm were blasted down in the streets of towns 50 miles from the nearest fire line. The sun was completely obscured in Billings, 500 miles away from the main path of the fire. Remarkable atmospheric disturbances were felt all over the country. While United States Weather Forecaster Brandenburg in Denver watched his thermometer, the temperature dropped 19 degrees in 10 minutes, and at 5 o'clock, a 42 mile-an-hour gale swept Denver, enveloping it in a pall of smoke from the Idaho-Montana fires, 800 miles distant. At Cheyenne, Wyoming, the thermometer registered 38, the lowest reported on the weather map.

"You can't outrun wind and fire that are traveling 70 miles an hour. You can't hide when you are entirely surrounded by red-hot color. You can't see when it's pitch black in the afternoon. There were men who went stark raving crazy, men who flung themselves into the on-rushing flames, men who shot themselves.

"It was the Big Blowup!"

1910

HARRY S. KAUFMAN
Contact
Montana

Forest Ranger. Absaroka National Forest.

AUGUST.

10. Fire pretty well out except the burning snags along the line. Roy and crew return at 2:00-P.M. after dinner, they again went out and started war on the snags.

11. Roy and I went back on top of the ridge to Dry Creek divide, over which the fire was coming with a vengence. We then return to the crew. Roy remained with the crew, while I went to Nottingham's and Vaughn's ranches and sent in an order for supplies. I then return to camp and d--- tired too.

12. Nottingham arrived early with supplies and moved me and 5 men with a part of the outfit to the mouth of Swamp Cr. He then returned and moved the remainder of the outfit to the upper side of Swamp Cr. where we could get action on the Dry Cr. fire.

13. Roy came down after tobacco, which he obtained at the commisary at the Steam Shovel camp. The supplies also arrived which went up to the big camp. Roy and Nottingham took them up. I went out over the fire line and found it all OK. Newman came down after shoes as his were all in.

14. Ellis went to Noxon and I went over to the other camp and packed and started his pack outfit for him, during his absence. My small fire still burning.

15. Still fighting the small fire, we backfired this afternoon.

16. A very windy and smoky day. Fires burning every where, it seems the whole country is a-fire, judging by the smoke. Carney came down after a pair of shoes. Three men quit me today, were all in.

17. Eight men quit to day, some all in and others found the hill climbing a little to hard for them, I sent in their time and let them go.

18. My luck still prevails, as I was able to get back 2 men that had quit and also picked up 5 more. Country very smoky.

19. Took two men up to the main camp, found everything going smooth. I return again in the afternoon, and was informed by the flunky that the little fire above camp was getting away from my guards stationed there, after I had ate a lunch, I went up to the fire line, but every thing was all OK., but I kept the men out all the night, never the less.

20. Sent Nottingham and team to the other camp after a few supplies and 5 men, they arrived at 4:30-P.M. The fire across the river, that Ellis and crew were fighting broke out proper, which being whipped by a strong gale, came over the Marten Cr. divide like fury and put Vaughn's and Wilcox's ranches very much in danger. After supper I sent out the night crew and then went over to see if I could be of any help, when there, I found it a very serious affair. I immediately startod back fireing, later on the sparks jumped the river thus compelling me to return to my camp and route the day crww out of their beds and take them to the small fires on the river, back above Nottingham's ranch. We finally got them under control at 1:00-A.M.

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Forest Ranger. Absaroka National Forest.

AUGUST.

21. This morning the wind is still blowing furiously and further more, if this wind don't let up, there is no telling where the fire will go to or what it will do. Fitzpatrick, the packer, who I had sent to the other camp to bring out the other crew, returned and reported that he had gave the warning and went after a team, but was cut off on all sides, and by quiting his horse and going down into a well and thus saved himself. It was nip and tuck between us and the flames, all the day, to see which would have the Nottingham's buildings. At about 3:00-P.M., Ranger Clark arrived with a bunch of 10 men that had been run out of Stearns Cr. which crowd, he emmediately turned over to me and of course, made the world look a little brighter. This evening we have the fire under control but the other crew has not arrived and am, myself, a little doubtful as to whether they will ever arrive. Every body is working like beaver. The wind is terrific.

22. The wind let up a little this morning, so I went across the river and there met Ellis, with the supplies for me, which I needed very much. Vaughn's house still stands, but every thing else on the West Side of the river is gone, even the R.R. trestle and the Co. This morning there's a crew of about 400 men at work building a new, temporary, road around the trestle, before I could return to camp, Newman, one of my men came after me, stating that the other part of my crew were coming in, in ones and two's and crippled, and also that some were killed. I immediately return and found them in hard times, so I set all hands busy washing their eyes and dressing the wounds.. Two were horribly burned. I then called for 6 men to accompany me out over the burn to get the rest of the boys that were lost. We struck out at a rather fast gait and took some milk and other necessary supplies along. We found my foreman and one man coming along the trail, all in and the man all burned. I sent two men back with them, and I then went on, went to the Ranger Station, up on Swamp Cr. but could not find any trace of the missing 9 men. I again return to camp and find Fitzpatrick's little horse alive and in rather hard times, as he was pretty well singed. On my arrival in camp I found 5 more men had arrived and the two wounded, I immediately started to give a bath and put some clean underwear on them and made them a good couch of hay. I also sent a man to Trout Cr. to teleghaph for a Dr. I sat up all the night awaiting the arrival of the Dr. but he did not come. The boys, about midnight, seemed a little better.

23. No Docter arrived, so after starting the boys out, I dressed Anderson and started for Plaines, his home. I delivered him in good shape, then I sent the Dr. around, seen the Corner and left on a frieght train to Thompson Falls. Called upon Bushnell at his office, and met Clark, the Ranger there.

24. Brought a host of supplies and truck for the boys and returned to camp on 41. The dead had been brought in and again removed to Noxon for burriel.

25. Roy and I went out over the fire line, thence into Noxon, where I seen Clark and Ellis. I squared up every thing and made ready to leave, as I was ordered to Thompson with the crew. I tried to get the tickets on the trains, request, but nothing doing, I would have to use tickets on on day of issue, so Roy and I returned on a freight train.

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AUGUST:

26. Had Nottingham to sign up all the vouchers, and then I went to Noxon and took Jacobs along. I got the tickets (41) and returned to the spur on the Dinky, where I met the crew, all hands off for Thompson Falls. After dinner I"rounded up"the entire crew and started, after the wagons, to camp. Had a H---! of a time getting started, but I finally got into camp with all hands at 10:00-P.M.

27. Set up camp and also went out to the fire, in company with Roy and Ranger Brown. We found a ground fire and it burning its self out. We then came down on the creek bottom.

28. All hands cutting trail, so as to be able to move camp to the fire. Roy returned at noon. In the evening, Johnson and I went to Thompson.

29. The crew finished cutting the trail. Johnson got excused from the jury, we returned in the evening. Roy reports very little fire.

30. Working on the fire line, very little fire.At 3:30-P.M. it started raining, not very fast, but fast enough to put a dampner on it.

31. All hands, again on the fire area, cutting down snags and putting trail around the fire where we found it. In the afternoon, it started raining for fair, all hands quit the fire line and came in, soaked to the hide.

SEPTEMBER.

1. Raining all the A.M. Roy and I came to Thompson after the wagons to move the camp. All hands went to Thompson and were paid off. Cleared during the evening.

2. Roy and I came to Noxon on 41, then went to see Clark about the horses, which was OK.

3. Roy and I took an early start with the horses and went to Nottingham's ranch, where we crossed on the ferry, after dinner we went up Swamp Cr. in search of the stolen tools. We found one cache of 4 axes and 2 handles, the remainder, we could not find. We took the axes along and then left them at Nottingham's ranch. On our return, we were caught in a severe rain storm and were soaked to the hide.

4. Sunday:

5. Labor Day: Nothing doing, but rain at intervals.

6. Left Noxon and came on to Thompson, where I received my transportation request. I secured a ticket and started for Livingston Mont. on No.6. Snowing and raining enroute.

7. Arrived in Livingston OK. but tired and sleepy. Quite stormy. I phoned out to the Knight ranch for my horses. Horses arrived in the evening.

8. Had the horses shod in the A.M. Did not leave town, as it was very stormy and no sign of it letting up, so I remained in town.

1910 fires

"THE BIG FIRE"

by

Joe B. Halm

Out of the underbrush dashed a man - grimy, breathless, hat in hand. At his heels came another. Then a whole crew, all casting fearful glances behind them.

"She's coming! The whole country's afire! Grab your stuff, ranger, and let's get outa here!" gasped the leader.

This scene, on the afternoon of August 20, 1910, stands out vividly in my memory. The place was a tiny, timbered flat along a small creek in the headwaters of the St. Joe River, in Idaho. The little flat, cleared of undergrowth to accommodate our small camp, seemed dwarfed beneath the great pines and spruce. The little stream swirled and gurgled beneath the dense growth and windfall, and feebly lent moisture to the thirsting trees along its banks.

For weeks forest rangers with crews of men had been fighting in a vain endeavor to hold in check the numerous fires which threatened the very heart of the great white-pine belt in the forests of Idaho and Montana. For days an ominous, stifling pall of smoke had hung over the valleys and mountains. Crews of men, silent and grim, worked along the encircling fire trenches. Bear, deer, elk and mountain lions stalked stary-eyed and restless through the camps, their fear of man overcome by a greater terror. Birds, bewildered, hopped about in the thickets, their song subdued, choked by the stifling smoke and oppressive heat. No rain had fallen since May. All vegetation stood crisp and brown, seared and withered by the long drought, as if by blight. The fragrance of summer flowers had given way to the tang of dead smoke. The withered ferns and grasses were covered by a hoar-frost of gray ashes. Men, red-eyed and sore of lung, panted for a breath of untainted air. The sun rose and set beyond the pall of smoke. All nature seemed tense, unnatural and ominous.

It had taken days to slash a way through the miles of tangled wilderness to our fire, sixty-five miles from a railroad. On August 18, this fire was confined within trenches; all seemed well; a day or two more and all would have been considered safe. Difficulties in transportation developed which necessitated reducing our crew from eighty-five to eighteen men.

I had just returned after guiding our remaining packers with their stock to one of our supply camps, when our demoralized crew dashed in. Incoherently, the men told how the fire had sprung up everywhere about them as they worked. The resinous smoke had become darker, the air even more oppressive and quiet. As if by magic, sparks were fanned to flames which licked the trees into one great conflagration. They had dropped their tools and fled for their lives. A great wall of fire was coming out of the northwest. Even at that moment small, charred twigs came sifting out of the ever-darkening sky. The foreman, still carrying his ax, was the last to arrive. "Looks bad," he said. Together we tried to calm the men. The cook hurried the preparation of an early supper. A slight wind now stirred the treetops overhead; a faint, distant roar was wafted to my ears. The men heard it; a sound as of heavy wind, or a distant waterfall. Three men, believing safety lay in flight, refused to stay. "We're not going to stay here and be roasted alive. We're going."

Things looked bad. Drastic steps were necessary. Supper was forgotten. I slipped into my tent and strapped on my gun. As I stepped out a red glow was already lighting the sky. The men were pointing excitedly to the north.

"She's jumped a mile across the canyon," said the foreman, who had been talking quietly to the men. Stepping before them, I carelessly touched the holster of the gun and delivered an ultimatum with outward confidence, which I by no means felt.

"Not a man leaves this camp. We'll stay by this creek and live to tell about it. I'll see you through. Every man hold out some grub, a blanket, and a tool. Chuck the rest in that tent, drop the poles and bury it."

The men did not hesitate. The supplies, bedding, and equipment were dumped into the tent, the poles jerked out, and sand shoveled over it. Some ran with armloads of canned goods to the small bar in the creek, an open space scarcely thirty feet across. Frying pans, pails, and one blanket for each man were moved there. Meanwhile the wind had risen to hurricane velocity. Fire was now all around us, banners of incandescent flames licked the sky. Showers of large, flaming brands were falling everywhere. The quiet of a few minutes before had become a horrible din. The hissing, roaring flames, the terrific crashing and rending of falling timber was deafening, terrifying. Men rushed back and forth trying to help. One young giant, crazed with fear, broke and ran. I dashed after him. He came back, wild-eyed, crying, hysterical. The fire had closed in; the heat became intolerable.

All our trust and hope was in the little stream and the friendly gravel bar. Some crept beneath wet blankets, but falling snags drove them out. There was wet air over the water. Armed with buckets, we splashed back and forth in the shallow stream throwing water as high as our strength would permit, drenching the burning trees. A great tree crashed across our bar; one man went down, but came up unhurt. A few yards below, a great log jam, an acre or more in extent, the deposit of a cloudburst in years gone by, became a roaring furnace, a threatening hell. If the wind changed, a single blast from this inferno would wipe us out. Our drenched clothing steamed and smoked; still the men fought. Another giant tree crashed, cutting deep into the little bar, blinding and showering us with sparks and spray. But again the men nimbly side-stepped the hideous meteoric monster.

After what seemed hours, the screaming, hissing, and snapping of millions of doomed trees, and the showers of sparks and burning brands grew less. The fire gradually subsided. Words were spoken. The drenched, begrimed men became more hopeful. Some even sought tobacco in their water-soaked clothing. Another hour and we began to feel the chill of the night. The hideous, red glare of the inferno still lighted everything; trees still fell by the thousands. Wearily, the men began to drag the water-soaked blankets from the creek and dry them; some scraped places beneath the fallen trees where they might crawl with their weary, tortured bodies out of reach of the falling snags. The wind subsided. Through that long night beside a man-made fire, guards sat, a wet blanket around their chilled bodies.

Dawn broke almost clear of smoke, the first in weeks. Men began to crawl stiffly out from their burrows and look about. Such a scene! The green, standing forest of yesterday was gone; in its place a charred and smoking mass of melancholy wreckage. The virgin trees, as far as the eye could see,

were broken or down, devoid of a single sprig of green. Miles of trees - sturdy, forest giants - werelaid prone. Only the smaller trees stood, stripped and broken. The great log jam still burned. Save for the minor burns and injuries, all were safe. Inwardly, I gave thanks for being alive. A big fellow, a Swede, the one who had refused to stay, slapped me on the back and handed me my gun. I had not missed it.

"You lost her in the creek last night. You save me my life," he said, simply. His lip trembled as he walked away.

The cook had already salvaged a breakfast from the trampled cache in the creek. Frying ham and steaming coffee drove away the last trace of discomfort.

"What are your plans?" asked the foreman, after several cups of coffee.

"First we'll dig out our tent, salvage the grub, and then look the fire over. We'll order more men and equipment and hit the fire again."

Little did I know as I spoke that our fire that morning was but a dot on the blackened map of Idaho and Montana. After breakfast we picked our way through the fire to our camp of yesterday. All was safe. We moved the remaining equipment to the little bar. Our first thought was for the safety of our two packers and thepack stock at our supply camp. The foreman and I set out through the fire over the route of the old trail, now so changed and unnatural. With ever-increasing apprehension we reached the first supply camp where I had left the packers. Only a charred, smoking mass of cans and equipment marked the spot.

What had become of the men? Not a sign of life could we find. They must have gone to the next supply camp. We hurried on, unmindful of the choking smoke and our burned shoes. We came upon our last supply camp; this, too, was a charred, smoldering mass. Still no signs of the men. A half mile beyond we suddenly came upon the remains of a pack saddle; then, another; the girths had been cut. Soon we found the blackened remains of a horse. Feverishly we searched farther. Next we found a riding saddle. With sinking heart we hastened on. More horses and more saddles. The fire was growing hotter. We halted, unable to go farther. We must go back for help and return when the heat had subsided.

Smoke darkened the sky; the wind had again risen to a gale; trees were once more falling all about us. We took Shelter in a small cave in a rock ledge where the fire had burned itself out. Here we sat, parched, almost blind with smoke and ashes. Once the foreman voiced my thoughts: "The wind will die down toward night, then we can go back to camp." The fury of the wind, however, increased steadily. Fires roared again, and across the canyon trees fell by the hundreds.

After what seemed like hours, we crept out of our cramped quarters and retraced our steps. The storm had subsided slightly. If the remains of the trail had been littered that morning, it was completely filled now. We came to a bend in the creek where the trail passed over a sharp hogback. As we neared the top, we again came into the full fury of the wind. Unable to stand, pelted by gravel and brands and blinded by ashes, we crawled across the exposed rocky ledges. I had never before, nor have I since, faced such a gale. On the ridges and slopes every tree was now uprooted and down. We passed the grim remains of the horses and supply

camps. In the darkness we worked our way back over and under the blackened, fallen trees. Fanned by the wind, the fire still burned fiercely in places. Torn and bleeding, we hurried on, hatless - in the darkness, lighted only by the myriads of fires - I picking the way, the foreman watching for falling trees. While passing along a ledge a great tree tottered above us and went its way to earth, rolling crazily down the slope. We ran for our lives, but the whirling trunk broake and lodged a few feet above. So absorbed were we with our plight that we nearly passed our camp on the little bar in the creek bottom.

By firelight we ate and related our fears as to the fate of the packers. As we talked, one of the men, pointed to the eastern sky, cried, "Look, she's coming again!" The sky in the east had taken on a hideous, reddish glow which became lighter and lighter. To the nerve-racked men it looked like another great fire bearing down upon us. Silently the men watched the phenomenon which lasted perhaps ten minutes. Then the realization came that the sky was clearing of smoke. In another brief space of time the sun shone. Not until then did I know that it was only 4 o'clock. A change in wind had shifted the smoke toward the northwest. We later found that the burn extended but a mile or two to the south of us.

Daylight next morning found us chopping and sawing a route back through the now cooled burn toward civilization, searching for our packers. That day I visited a prospector's cabin on a small side creek, a mile from the trail, to learn the fate of the man, a cripple. His earth-covered dugout by some miracle had withstood the fire. There were no signs of life about. Whether the man had gone out earlier in the week, or had suffered the same fate as our packers, I did not then know. Evening found our little party many miles from camp. We saw the remains of an elk and several deer; also, a grouse, hopping about with feet and feathers burned off - a pitiful sight. Men who quenched their thirst from small streams immediately became deathly sick. The clear, pure water running through miles of ashes had become a strong, alkaline solution, polluted by dead fish, killed by the lye. Thereafter we drank only spring water.

Late that night, weary and silent, the men returned to camp and crept into their blankets. Daylight again found us on the trail equipped with packs and food and blankets. About noon we came upon an old white horse, one of our pack string, badly singed, but very much alive, foraging in the creek.

Late one day, the sixth since the great fire, a messenger, besmudged and exhausted, reached us. From him we learned that Wallace and many other towns and villages had burned; that at least a hundred men had lost their lives and that scores were still missing. He had seen many of the dead brought in.

Our crew had been given up as lost. Several parties were still endeavoring to reach us from different points. Ranger Haines with his crew was then several miles back and would cut the trail to take us out. Our packers, he said, had reached safety. The crippled prospector was still among the missing, and we were to search for him. For three days we combed the burned mountains and creeks for the missing man. On the third afternoon, weary and discouraged, we stumbled upon the ghastly remains, burned beyond recognition. His glasses and cane, which we found near, told the mute story of the last, great struggle of the unfortunate man who, had he but known it, would have been safe in his little shack. In a blanket we bore the shapeless thing out to the relief crew.

From Ranger Haines I heard the story of our packers. Shortly after I had left them they had become alarmed. Hastily saddling the fourteen head of horses, they had left the supply camp for Iron Mountain, sixty miles away. Before a mile was covered they realized the fire was coming and that, encumbered with the slow-moving stock, escape would be impossible. They cut the girths and freed the horses, hoping they might follow. Taking a gentle little saddle mare between them, they fled for their lives, one ahead, the other holding the animal by the tail, switching her along. The fire was already roaring behind. On they ran, the panting animal pulling first one, then the other. Hundreds of spark-set fires sprang up beside the trail; these grew into crown fires, becoming the forerunner of the great conflagration. By superhuman effort they reached the summit on the Idaho-Montana state line. Here the fire in the sparse timber lost ground. On sped the men down the other side until the fire was left behind. Ten miles farther, completely exhausted, they reached a small cabin, where they unsaddled their jaded, faithful little horse, threw themselves into a bunk and fell asleep.

Two hours later the whinnie of the horse awoke them. A glare lighted the cabin. They rushed out; the fire was again all around them! They rescued the little horse from the already burning barn and dashed down the gulch. It was a desperate race for life. Trees falling above shot down the steep slopes and cut off their trail. The now saddleless, frightened little beast, driven by the men, jumped over and crawled beneath these logs like a dog. Two miles of this broght them to some old placer workings and safety. Exhausted, they fell. The fire swept on.

They had crossed a mountain range and covered a distance of nearly forty miles in a little over six hours, including their stay at the cabin - almost a superhuman feat.

Returning to Wallace, I learned that the outside world had suffered far more than we. Eighty-nine men had given up their lives in the great holocaust. The hospitals were overflowing with sick and injured. Hundreds had become homeless refugees.

Assigned the task of photographing the scene of the many casualties, I had an opportunity to observe the extent of the appalling disaster and to reconstruct the scene of the last, hopeless stand taken by those heroic, unselfish men who gave their lives that others might live. Still, not all those heroic efforts were hopeless or vain. Ranger Pulaski, who so valiantly saved all but six of a large crew, has become a national hero, an outstanding figure in the annals of forest history.

Forest Supervisor Weigle, who for weeks had so tirelessly worked day and night, unselfishly and alone plunged through the very face of the tempest of fire in an attempt to warn the citizens of Wallace of their danger. At last hopelessly trapped, he rushed through a burning mining mill into a tunnel. As the building fell the tunnel caved, threatening to bury him alive. Covering his head with his coat, he crawled out, plunging through the burning wreckage into a tiny creek. In a few hours he had worked his way through the fire to Wallace, there directing and assisting with the dead and injured.

Ranger Danielson, who so courageously led his little crew into an open mining cut on a mountain-side, will bear the horrible, purple scars on neck and hands to his grave, as will all those who were with him. Ranger Phillips, Watson, Vandyke, Rock, Bell, and many others saved the lives of hundreds by their cool, timely judgment. Scores of other unsung heroes still live and work among us, their fortitude a bright and lasting example.

On Big Creek, thirty men lost their lives while others lay prone for hours in the chilling waters of a tiny stream, great forest giants falling around and across them. Here three men were crushed by a falling tree. One of these unfortunates was caught only by the foot. Men a few feet away heard his cries and prayers, but were powerless to assist. He dug and fought to tear away, but the thing which he had come to save held him fast until coma and finally death relieved his sufferings. On Seltzer Creek the ghastly human toll was twenty-nine. An entire crew was annihilated. The men fell as they ran before the merciless fire.

Each scene is a gripping story of almost unparalleled heroism and sacrifice which it would take pages to recount. Our experience as compared with these was tame indeed, insignificant.

More than three decades have passed through the hour-glass of time and nature has long since reclothed the naked landscape with grass, shrubs and trees, but the great sacrifice of human life is not, and can never be, replaced or forgotten.